

Message Text

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PAGE 01 JERUSA 01373 301037Z

15

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FM AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4736

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

USINT CAIRO

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L JERUSALEM 1373

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, XF

SUBJ: PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATION

SUMMARY: WEST BANK SUPPORT FOR PLO REPRESENTATION IN PEACE
NEGOTIATIONS AND FOR EVENTUAL SEPARATE PALESTINE STATE AMOUNTS
TO PERHAPS 80 PERCENT OF POPULATION. WITH WIND BLOWING IN PLO
DIRECTION, REMAINING 20 PERCENT ARE KEEPING THEIR HEADS DOWN.
THERE IS CONSIDERABLE EXPECTATION THAT PLO WILL TRY TO BROADEN
REPRESENTATIVENESS OF PALESTINE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY BY ADDING
WEST BANK PERSONALITIES. SOME WHO GO ALONG WITH MAJORITY VIEW
NEVERTHELESS BELIEVE WEST BANK/GAZA STATE SHOULD ULTIMATELY LINK
UP WITH JORDAN. HARDLY ANYONE TAKES ISRAELI VIEWS ON QUESTION
INTO ACCOUNT. IF OUR LOCAL PERSPECTIVE IS REPRESENTATIVE, US
SHOULD AVOID POSITIONS OPPOSING A PLO ROLE IN NEGOTIATIONS OR A
SEPARATE PALESTINIAN STATE. EMD SUMMARY.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 JERUSA 01373 301037Z

1. IN WAKE OF ALGERIAN SUMMIT WEST BANKERS, NEVER NOTED FOR

UNANIMITY OF VIEW, NOW SEEM CLOSE TO UNANIMITY OF PROPOSITIONS THAT:

A. PLO-BASED DELEGATION SHOULD NEGOTIATE FOR PALESTINIANS;

B. RESULT OF NEGOTIATION, AT LEAST INITIALLY, SHOULD BE INDEPENDENT PALESTINIAN STATE IN WEST BANK AND GAZA WITH LARGELY PLO LEADERSHIP;

C. HUSSEIN IS NOT WANTED AS NEGOTIATOR OR RULER.

2. WE HAVE HELD OFF ACCEPTING ASSERTIONS OF WIDESPREAD ACCORD ON THESE POINTS. WE WERE TOLD EARLY THIS WEEK, HOWEVER, BY WELL-INFORMED ISRAELI JOURNALIST LITANI (HA'ARETZ) THAT HIS SOUNDINGS ON WEST BANK SHOWED ABOUT 80 PERCENT ACTIVELY SUPPORTED OR WENT WILLINGLY ALONG WITH THIS LINE. WE TRIED THIS FIGURE OUT ON HUSSEIN LOYALIST ANWAR NUSEIBEH AND ANTI-HUSSEIN LAWYER AZIZ SHEHADEH AND BOTH AGREED. WE ARE NOW INCLINED TO THINK IT IS SOMEWHERE NEAR THE TRUTH, AT LEAST UNDER PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES.

3. OF REMAINING 20 PERCENT, MOST SEEM TO BE UNWILLING TO RAISE A VOICE AGAINST PREVAILING TREND. RETURN OF PLO TO GOVERN PALESTINIAN STATE SEEMS REAL POSSIBILITY NOW, WHILE HUSSEIN'S RETURN DOES NOT. WOULD-BE OPPONENTS ARE BEING PRUDENT. THERE IS CONVICTION, IN POLITICALLY-ACTIVE NABLUS ESPECIALLY, THAT FEDAYEEN ARE KEEPING AN EYE ON PEOPLE'S COMINGS AND GOINGS. PLANNED MEETING OF CONSUL GENERAL AND CONGENOFF WITH NUMBER OF NABLUS FIGURES, AND NABLUS DINNER INVITATION FOR CONGENOFF, WERE CALLED OFF WITH EXPLANATION THAT FEDAYEEN RADIO HAD BEEN NAMING NAMES OF NABLUS ASSOCIATING WITH WRONG PEOPLE. WE WERE CLEARLY IN CATEGORY OF WRONG PEOPLE.

4. UPSURGE OF EXPRESSED SUPPORT FOR PLO AND SEPARATE STATE HAS BEEN STIMULATED BY WIDESPREAD ASSUMPTION THAT NOW, FOR FIRST TIME, IT IS WORTHWHILE FOR WEST BANKERS TO DECIDE WHAT THEY WANT. WHEN THEY REALLY THOUGHT ABOUT IT THEY DID NOT WANT HUSSEIN ON ANYTHING LIKE OLD TERMS. THERE HAD LONG BEEN EMOTIONAL IDENTIFICATION WITH PLO, BUT THIS STOPPED SHORT OF POLITICAL SUPPORT BECAUSE CHANCE OF SETTLEMENT SEEMED SO REMOTE. NOW ONE HEARS IT SAID THAT FEDAYEEN HAVE EARNED RIGHT TO REPRESENT PALESTINIANS BY FIGHTING

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 JERUSA 01373 301037Z

FOR RIGHTS WHILE WEST BANKERS LIVED IN COMPARATIVE COMFORT UNDER ISRAELI RULE. THERE IS ALSO THE LACK OF ALTERNATIVE PALESTINIAN LEADERS OF ANY VISIBILITY.

5. WEST BANKERS WHO TRY TO GIVE PRACTICAL FORM TO GENERAL WISH TEND TO PROPOSE THAT PLO DRAW INTO PALESTINIAN NATIONAL ASSEMBLY LARGE REPRESENTATION FROM HERE AND FROM GAZA. NUMBERS OF POLITICALLY ACTIVE MEN ARE SITTING BY PHONES WAITING TO BE INVITED TO

PNA MEETING REPORTEDLY PLANNED IN NEXT FEW DAYS IN CAIRO (THEY BELIEVE, HOWEVER, THAT ISRAELIS WOULD PROBABLY, AS IN PAST, TRY TO PREVENT THEIR ATTENDING). THEY SEE SUCH BROADLY-REPRESENTATIVE PALESTINIAN ASSEMBLY AS SOUND BASIS OF AUTHORITY FOR PARTICIPATION IN SETTLEMENT.

6. THERE IS GROUP THAT, WHILE SHARING MAJORITY VIEWS GENERALLY, FEELS THAT WEST BANK/GAZA IS NOT DESIRABLE ENTITY OVER LONG RUN AND THAT NATURAL LINKAGE IS WITH JORDAN. SOME OF THEM PROPOSE NEGOTIATING WITH AMMAN AFTER NEGOTIATION WITH ISRAELIS, WORKING OUT SOME FORM OF ASSOCIATION. OTHERS LOOK FARTHER AHEAD TO FUNDAMENTAL CHANGES IN JORDAN THAT WOULD CREATE BETTER BASIS FOR LINKAGE.

7. EVEN CASUAL READER WILL BE STRUCK BY FAILURE, IN ALL THIS, TO TAKE ACCOUNT OF WELL-KNOWN ISRAELI OPPOSITION TO NEGOTIATING WITH PLO AND TO SEPARATE STATE. IT IS IN FACT NOT CONSIDERED BY MOST WEST BANKERS. THEY DO NOT AFTER ALL HAVE RESPONSIBILITY FOR ACHIEVING SETTLEMENT, AND THEY TEND LEAVE PRACTICAL DIFFICULTIES OUT OF ACCOUNT.

8. COMMENT: WHERE ALL THIS LEAVES US IS HARD TO SAY. FROM NARROW JERUSALEM VANTAGE POINT, IT APPEARS THAT PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATION BY PLO, AND POSSIBLE EVENTUAL PALESTINIAN STATE, ARE POLITICAL FACTS TO BE RECKONED WITH. WE ASSUME EFFORTS ARE BEING MADE ELSEWHERE TO MESH THESE FACTS WITH NEGOTIATING REALITIES. BROADENING BASE OF PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATION AND ASSOCIATING HUSSEIN WITH IT IN SOME WAY MIGHT BE ONE AVENUE. IN ANY CASE, WE HOPE US WILL NOT TAKE A PRIORI POSITION AGAINST PLO ROLE OR AGAINST PALESTINIAN STATE. PUTTING ALL THIS TOGETHER WILL BE HARD ENOUGH WITHOUT BURDENING OURSELVES WITH DO'S AND DON'TS OF THIS KIND. IN FACT, IF PALESTINIANS ARE TO BE WITH US AS INTEGRAL POLITICAL ENTITY IN AREA, PERHAPS AS START, US COULD

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 JERUSA 01373 301037Z

WELL LOOK FOR POSITIVE STEPS TO IMPROVE (INDEED CREATE) RELATIONSHIP WITH THEM.

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